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THE MORALITY OF NATIONS.

WE are all willing enough to acknowledge that we are under some sort of moral law. Our life is regulated by a "Do this," "Abstain from that" above and beyond that limited circle of duties sanctioned by the law of the land. But it seems to be a moot point whether there are any laws of politics like the laws of ethics—whether there is such a thing as a morality of nations as well as a morality of individuals.

Of course, in one sense of the term, there is no question about it. The citizens of a state, or members of a race, have in all cases certain characteristics—more or less strongly marked—which are exemplified in all or most members of the race or nation. These are traits of national or racial character, and lead to different nations regulating their own affairs in ways of their own, and holding themselves differently towards their neighbors. In this way we have as a fact a national character, not very distinctly traced perhaps, but still there in its broad features. Perhaps we might call it a national morality,—traits of moral character which distinguish one race from another and develop from generation to generation in connection with their surroundings.

But it is a further question than this that raises doubt in many minds. Can we say of the state or nation, as we do of the individual, that it *ought* to do or abstain from anything? Is there anywhere to be found a moral code for nations corresponding to the moral law to which the individual conscience bows? This is the question which I purpose to consider here: comparing national with individual morality, and asking in what sense states may be said to be under moral obligation—to have duties to their citizens or to other states. And I shall endeavor to carry out the discussion without entering into any question as to the philosophical basis of ethics or of politics.

Behind the fictitious personality which is ascribed to a state or nation there is a more concrete reality than the will of emperor or cabinet or popular majority. The state (it may indeed be said) is nothing but the people who make it, or those who serve or guide it. And this, at least, is true: that the state is nothing without the people or apart from them. It *is* the people, but the people in certain relations to one another, with a common history, common traditions, and a common national character which has grown out of these and will determine the conduct of the people when they act together and for common ends. The state is the people, but the people organized for certain purposes. It is not enough to say that the action of a state is but the decision of a king or prime minister or of a majority in Parliament. The decision or the action is not an individual or personal one: it is representative of the nation. It may have been induced by selfish motives; king or minister or parliamentary majority may play for its own hand; but still the action concerns the relation of the state as a whole to its citizens or to other states. And if it has escaped this worst but common fault,—if the nation's representative has acted for national and not for personal ends,—can we say that, in this case, the action done by a nation's representative for national ends is to be judged in the same way as if it were a merely personal or individual action?

The state, accordingly, is not merely a collection of individuals. It is these individuals organized in a definite way. We may expect, therefore, to find that the principles of state-action and the principles of individual action are not the same. At least it is clear that the state moves in a different region, so to speak, from that in which individuals move. The state may, or rather always does, act by means of individuals. There is no other agency known to us. But individuals, acting as and for the state, have a different function from that which belongs to them as individuals. Men have a duty first to other individuals, secondly and at the same time to that organized social body which we call the state. The state also has a twofold activity, first, in relation to its own citizens, secondly, in relation to other states. In one region of its activity

the state and the individual bear a relation to one another which may be imperfectly apprehended as a reciprocal relation. The individual has duties to the state and perhaps rights against it in turn; while the state, within certain limits, controls the action of the individual: educating him perhaps, laying down laws for his social and industrial behavior, and compelling him to contribute of his property, and even to sacrifice his liberty of action and risk his life, in defence of her integrity and the objects which she holds worthy of a nation's endeavor. In this region the functions of the state and of the individual are reciprocal, not identical. In the other region of its activity, the work of the state has at most only an analogy with the work of the individual. Its relations, diplomatic or military, with other states may be compared with the relations of one individual to another. But the two sets of relations are certainly not the same.

The regions covered by individual and by national activity must, therefore, be admitted to be distinct. But it may still be maintained that they are—or ought to be—regulated by the same ethical principles. It is here that conflict of opinion enters. On the one hand, it is often assumed or asserted that national and individual morality are the same; on the other hand, they are sometimes contrasted in such a way as to suggest the conclusion that they have nothing in common with one another, and that national morality, in any sense of the word which involves moral obligation, does not exist. The latter view is apparently that maintained by her Britannic Majesty's ambassador at Paris in an address on "National and Individual Morality Compared," delivered to the students at Glasgow on November 9, 1888. Lord Lytton is familiar both with government and with diplomacy; his authority regarding the practice of government is undoubtedly great; and his arguments on this point must be allowed to be weighty. With the other view—the view that the same moral laws hold of the statesman acting for the nation, and of the individual in his private life—we are more familiar. Many politicians are in the habit of appealing in a comprehensive and perplexing way to moral first principles.

And these appeals—crude as the principles on which they rest may be—argue at least a readiness on the part of the people to judge the state by the moral law of the individual. On this point, the judgment of the people seems unanimously to contradict the experience of diplomatists of all ages. On the one side, we have all plain men declaring that the state ought to be moral as they are moral; on the other, those who are in the secret asserting that in this sense no state ever was, or could afford to be, moral. Between two such combatants, fighting with different weapons, how can the conflict be brought to an issue? Fortunately we have not far to go for a fairly precise statement of the plain man's case. "We maintain," says the London *Spectator* of 5th October, 1889, that a state "can, and occasionally does, commit all the crimes possible to a corporation; . . . above all, a state can murder and it can steal; and it commits the first crime when it executes any one knowing the execution to be unjust, and the second when it orders one man or one class to pay special taxes in order to benefit another." The state, it is held, can commit the same crimes as an individual, but only some of them. From others it has an immunity. Some crimes, it is acknowledged, cannot be committed by a corporation, or consequently by the state. We only need to look at the decalogue to see what some of them are. The state can hardly be said to be guilty of breaking the fifth commandment or the seventh. The most that can be said against it is that it gives its citizens undue liberty of doing so if they are so minded. But the state can steal, we are told, and it can murder.

In what sense can it be said that honesty is a duty of national as well as of individual morality? Can the state be properly said to be guilty of theft? There is a confusion, surely, at the very outset in saying that the state can commit a crime. A crime is something more than a sin, something more than an immoral act. It is an act punishable by law. It is the law of the land and the penal sanction which follows law which make an act a crime. It is absurd, therefore, to speak as if the state, acting legally, could commit a crime. A law may be pernicious or bad. It may be so bad—most

moralists acknowledge—as to make it a moral duty to disobey it. But to be criminal it would have to be a violation of law. To speak of a legal act as criminal is to confuse discussion by perverting the recognized meaning of words.

If the penalties against theft were to be removed from the statute-book, it would cease to be a crime. But it would be as much an offence against morality as before. Can the state then be guilty of this moral offence? An individual is guilty of theft whenever he takes for his own use the property of another without that other's consent. He may be in greater need of the thing stolen, or may intend to use it for a better purpose than the owner would have done; but none the less he steals it, he is guilty of theft. Can the state steal and be a thief like this? If so, no private thief was ever so incorrigible and systematic an offender as the state is. At the present time it enters each man's house and demands a fortieth part of his income for its own purposes. It takes away part of his property for the support of the poor, part for the education of other men's children, and other portions of it in various ways for various purposes—for almost every purpose except religious purposes, which are supposed to have been sufficiently provided for by the piety of preceding generations. Surely no one will call this theft: there are few to be found who even think it wrong. The state has certain necessary functions to perform; and the most extreme *laissez-faire* politicians admit the justice of taxation for these purposes. Individuals must willingly or unwillingly contribute of their means to support the state. It must live and do its proper work, and it is with full moral right that it takes the goods of its citizens to enable it to do so. The reason is admitted to be a sufficient justification. But how would such an apology be received for the seizure of one man's goods by another? It is said that a French thief once used the argument, without any conspicuous success. "But, my lord, I must live,—il faut vivre," he said. "Je n'y vois pas la nécessité," was the reply of the pedantic moralist on the bench, as he passed sentence of death. If one man seizes another man's goods without his permission, this is called theft: seizure of this kind is con-

stantly carried out by the state in levying taxes; yet we do not say that the state steals the taxes it collects.

Vain attempts have indeed been made by certain political theorists—doctrinaire politicians of the first water—to base the morality of taxation upon the consent of the taxed. “No taxation without representation” is their motto: an excellent maxim as a partial safeguard against unfair levying of taxes, but far from sufficient to induce the whole world to go up willingly to be taxed. If any evidence were needed, the custom-house officers might have something to tell us as to the willingness of many people to pay the taxes to which—according to this theory—they have already agreed, if taxation be founded on consent. But how could the possession of a vote for a single member of Parliament constitute consent to the decisions of a majority of its members? If the moral law of honesty—the law against stealing or theft—is the *same* for the nation as for the individual, then all taxation to which the taxed have not consented must be regarded as theft. But it is a position far short of this which the *Spectator* moralist is anxious to maintain. The state steals (he says) “when it orders one man, or one class, to pay special taxes in order to benefit another.” The offence is somewhat loosely defined. It might seem to apply to the poor rate, which taxes the class of householders for the benefit of the class of paupers; and to the educational rate, which taxes persons who have no children, or who send their children to schools not assisted by the government, for the benefit of those who send theirs to the Board School. Yet the *Spectator* could never be suspected of calling such taxes theft. It is more easy to imagine a failure in drawing the proper distinction. But the very difficulty of defining the distinction between just and unjust taxation shows that an unfair tax is something different from stealing. Theft can be easily defined and easily recognized. But it is a difficult matter to determine what is a fair principle of taxation; and no chancellor of the Exchequer would pretend to do more than approximate to this fairness in practice. Perhaps there are cases in which the name and legal forms of taxation may involve something more specific than unfairness

or injustice. When one individual or class uses its control of the legislature to lay the taxes upon others and let itself go free, it is not easy to distinguish the procedure from common dishonesty. There have been times in the past in which the arbitrary power of a small class has been used to excuse itself from taxation and lay the whole burden on the trader and the peasant. There are indications at the present time that the arbitrary power of a very much larger class may be tempted in the near future to retaliate, and, for its own relief and gain, to levy all contributions upon the less powerful but richer few. We do not call such actions theft; for they are done under the forms and carry with them the sanction of law: and by theft we commonly mean a breach of the law, or a crime. Yet it seems none the less dishonest for individuals to use the advantage of their position to provide for national wants by taking from others only, without contributing themselves. But we call the act dishonest only when we are judging the agents as individuals. It is dishonest only if the agents are really acting for themselves when pretending to act for the state. Individual morality becomes mixed with national morality when those through whom the state acts act for themselves and their own interests, instead of for the common good. The appropriateness of the charge of dishonesty will thus depend upon the motives of the individuals. The same act of confiscation, carried out by the combined wills of many, will imply dishonesty in those only who have voted for it out of covetousness. Others may have joined with them who have had no thought of personal gain; and these it would be absurd to call dishonest, however unfair or unjust their action may have been. Their action has not been a personal one; they have acted as representing the state, and the state—as I have already argued—cannot steal.

The code of individual morals cannot, therefore, be applied to the state. National morality is not the same thing—cannot be expressed by the same laws—as individual morality. But it does not follow from this that there is no such thing as a moral law for the conduct of states. The recognition that

the law of the land—statute law—may be bad, and should be altered or amended, implies a higher law by which it may be judged and to which it ought to conform. Because the state cannot steal, it does not follow that it may not be unjust. What the measure and criterion are of national justice, I do not pretend to determine now. In the duty of justice, we may think—and we shall not be far wrong—national and individual morality meet. It is a law both for the state and for the individual. Justice is, in fact, more a national or social, than a merely individual virtue. It is when the individual has to act not for himself, but as representing the state or a corporation, that scope for its application enters. Justice is the virtue of a judge, or of an examiner, or, in a measure, of an employer of labor, or of the head of a family. And in all these cases, the man who recognizes his duty may be said to be acting for a community—the state or some smaller social unit—and as representative of it. In an early code of individual morals—in the decalogue—there is no word of justice among the duties of man.

We may see in this way how the morality of the individual and of the nation have come to be spoken of and thought of as the same. A man plays many parts, and we are apt to confuse them. Perhaps he confuses them himself. Pretending to act for the nation, the statesman or ruler may prostitute his office, and, working for his own ends, break the laws of individual as well as of national morality. The individual again is often called upon to act for the state or for some smaller social aggregate; and the code of individual morality must be widened to take in this national or quasi-national activity.

This distinction may enable us to deal with another case more difficult than the preceding. A state can not only steal, we are told, but it can murder. And it does so “when it executes any one knowing the execution to be unjust.” Here again there is the same confusion between individual conduct and national. We hear often enough indeed of “legal murder.” But it is the language of metaphor colored by passion. Murder implies malice; and the state bears no malice. If the ruler gratifies his hatred or his ambition by using the final

sanction of the state's authority against his enemy, this is malice ; and, although under cover of law, the ruler has for himself incurred the moral guilt of murder. But it is because he has allowed his personal interest or enmity to sway his actions that he has brought himself within the scope of the law which says, "Thou shalt not kill." When David used his power as a king to gratify his private ends, and put Uriah in the forefront of the battle, he did not overstep the letter of the law by a hair's breadth. But he was guilty of murder as much as the moonlighter of to-day who shoots his landlord from behind a hedge or fires into a defenceless cottage. He was moved by malice against the obstacle in his path ; his action was not taken in his quality of king or judge, but to gratify his private ends. It may be and is the right and duty of the state, in certain circumstances, to kill or to expose to death ; and it must be admitted that a ruler may use the sword of the state unjustly without a personal or selfish motive in doing so. But it is not minimizing the guilt of such injustice when we say that it is a mistake to call it murder. There is no malice in the action, and malice is the essential note of murder. Murder is killing out of malice. Unjust killing is injustice ; it may or may not be murder in addition. Perhaps an historical example instanced by Lord Lytton is in place here, although it refers to international morality rather than to the rights and duties of a state in relation to its own citizens. "It is certain," he says, "that, in his conduct of public affairs, the first Napoleon committed many such offences against private morality. But the language of private morality cannot be applied to his public acts without great limitations. The kidnapping of the Duc d'Enghien, and his summary execution after a sham trial, was about as bad an act as well could be. But I should certainly hesitate to describe it as a murder in the ordinary sense. Morally, I think, it was worse than many murders for which men have been tried and punished by law. But I do *not* think that the English government in 1815 could, with any sort of propriety, have delivered up Napoleon to Louis XVIII. to be tried for that offence like a common criminal."

The state stands to its citizens in a relation which no one individual bears to another. To further its ends it may take their property and even their life. It neither steals nor murders in doing so. And yet, on the other hand, it is clear that it would be unjust to do so at random. State action is, or ought to be, for the common good of the whole; and the sacrifice of property, and still more that of life, can only be justified when necessary for the common welfare. The state must therefore be regarded as having duties to its citizens: though they are not the same as those one citizen owes to another. Conversely, the citizen may be said to have rights against the state,—not, indeed, an absolute right either to life, or property, or freedom of action, but a right not to be deprived of these, except for the good of the state, acting impartially for the good of all.

Thus far I have spoken of the morality of the state only in relation to its own citizens: and the position for which I have contended may seem hardly to require so much argument. Were it not for the confusion which surrounds the question, a simple statement might almost have taken the place of controversy. Were it not contended, on the one side, that the code of private morality holds for nations as well as for individuals, and that a state can commit all or almost all the offences—the crimes even—of which an individual may be guilty; and, on the other side, were not some writers inclined to ignore or to deny that there is anything that can be properly called national morality at all, it might have been unnecessary to insist at such length that the state is a moral agent, and that the moral end and moral code which ought to regulate its relation to its citizens, are closely bound up with, although not the same as, the duties to which its individual citizens are bound.

But the state has to do not only with its own citizens, but also with other states. Can any ethical principle hold of its behavior towards them? Is there any such thing as international morality which bears to states a similar relation to that which the laws of private morality bear to individual

men? In this region of foreign relations the conflict between the different views of national morality is accentuated and brought to a point. There is a sufficiently strong analogy between the state and the individual to give an appearance of reason to the assertion that, when different states are brought into relation, their conduct should be governed by the same laws as those which regulate the conduct of individuals. But, on the other hand, the analogy is weak enough at places to give support to such a contention as that urged by Lord Lytton. "First of all," he argues, "the subjects of private morals, that is to say, individuals, differ from the subjects of public morals, that is to say, nations, so widely that hardly a single proposition applicable to the one can be properly applied to the others. In the next place, of the classes of obligations which constitute private morals, only one, namely, justice, has a place in public morals at all; and the sort of justice which finds its place in public morals is totally different from the justice which relates to individuals."

There is much good sense in this statement. But, if it does not exaggerate the difference between the individual and the nation, at least it disregards their connection. It overstates the case, so as to lead as far from the truth as the opposing doctrine that private and public morals are the same. There is an apparent cynicism in it, too, from which we are apt to recoil, and, in so doing, to fall into the opposite extreme of judging the state by a standard that would be too narrow even for individuals: condemning all war as "multitudinous murder," and looking upon conquest, and even upon colonization, as but theft on a large scale.

There has long been a party in our country who have adopted this view, regarding war as sinful and immoral, and the profession of arms as no better than trade in murder. The horrors of war, the sacredness of human life, and the precepts of the religion of peace have combined to make them testify against the use of the weapon, which no statesman has ever been bold enough to propose that the nation should lay aside. This sense of the horror of war has been shared and expressed by writers who are yet keenly alive to the martial

pride of arms. "The murder of the campaign is done to military music," Thackeray makes his hero, Henry Esmond, say, after listening to Addison's heroics on the victories of Marlborough. "I was ashamed of my trade," he continues, "when I saw those horrors perpetrated, which came under every man's eyes. You hew out of your polished verses a stately image of smiling victory; I tell you 'tis an uncouth, distorted, savage idol; hideous, bloody, and barbarous. The rites performed before it are shocking to think of. You great poets should show it as it is,—ugly and horrible, not beautiful and serene. Oh, sir, had you made the campaign, believe me you never would have sung it so."

"Murder done to military music." Does this sum up the triumphs of war? Do battle and warfare rouse only the evil passions of a man, turning him into an infuriate beast or an incarnate fiend? Surely this is one side of the shield only. There is no fire that tries a man so keenly, bringing out and lighting up both the good and evil in him, as the long privations of war and the wild shock of battle. In spite of the terror and the squalor which Thackeray describes with such vivid realism,—or, largely, because of them,—the field of battle, which every man enters with his life in his hand, has been the scene of the noblest heroism and self-sacrifice, and has shown human nature at its best as well as at its worst.

It would have been strange had it been otherwise. For warfare, stern and savage as it is, is the high road by which human civilization has been obliged to advance hitherto. Perhaps it may be possible in the future to construct less stony and dangerous paths for the progress of mankind. Already much has been done to soften even the stern art of war, by the spread of a common feeling among different nations. Compare, for example, the treatment of non-combatants and of prisoners as it was even in Marlborough's campaigns with what took place in the Franco-German war of twenty years ago, where strict discipline was maintained in the invading army, and no plunder or reckless slaughter was permitted. The dogs of war were kept in leash. Warfare between civilized states is no longer to be compared with Hobbes's state of

nature, where all things are permitted, and there is neither good nor evil. Common consent has established that no needless misery is to be inflicted, and that no injury is to be done which does not contribute to the great end of victory.

Here, then, at least, is a redeeming feature in the dark picture that has been drawn of the iniquity of warfare. War cannot be altogether bad, for it might be worse than it is. When nations cast aside the methods of diplomacy and peaceful negotiation, and appeal to the God of battles to settle their disputes, they are not freed from the bonds of morality; and they have even acknowledged the obligation (though they may not call it such) to restrain the misery of war within the limits of what is necessary for the attainment of its end.

These considerations are already pointing us to the same conclusion regarding international morality as that which we have reached regarding the morality of a nation in its relation to its own citizens. War is not "multitudinous murder." It gives the individual soldier opportunity for many offences which may escape detection and punishment: but probably much less opportunity for murder than for other offences. For the soldier cannot easily have malice, or any other personal feeling, towards those to whom he is opposed. To talk of the state committing murder is absurd; for the state is not a subject of feeling, and consequently can bear no malice. To say that the statesman who orders the war, or the general who conducts it, is guilty of murder, is almost equally absurd, except in the isolated cases in which he can be shown to have entered upon it to gratify his private ends. War may be the result of wanton aggression, or of an unjust claim where the interests of two states clash; and such wars are rightly called unjust. But if there are unjust wars, it follows that resistance to this injustice must itself be just. If all conquest and aggression is wrong, the war undertaken in self-defence, and to protect a nation's territory and the freedom of its citizens, must surely be justified, in spite of the sacrifice of life it is sure to involve.

It is a mistake to speak of a nation as committing murder

in war,—even in an unjust war. For not only is the state without the motive which is essential to murder; but it is only individuals that are killed: the conqueror does not kill the hostile state. It may weaken or even maim it; but the analogy with individual morality is not complete, except in the cases—so rare that they can hardly be said to exist at all—when the one state is entirely exterminated by the other.

Perhaps there is a more complete analogy with private morals in the case of conquest, when, as the result of war, or by forcible seizure, one nation deprives another of part of its territory. Here there is a complete similarity in the external action. It is in the absence of a personal or selfish motive that the act of conquest by a nation differs from theft by an individual. On the whole, it may seem, however, that the similarity of the two cases is much more striking than their difference: so much so as to make it difficult to deny that there is some appropriateness in the use of the term theft. Must we in all cases, therefore, mete out to conquest a similar moral condemnation to that with which we regard the act of theft? There is one consideration to which, I think, weight must be given before we pass so sweeping a judgment. Within a nation the state is above all individuals; and, although no citizen has a right to take or use the property of another without his consent, the state recognizes this absolute right of an individual to his property only as against other individuals, not as against itself. The state, therefore, is there as a superior power to prevent, if it see fit, the individual from grossly misusing his property, or from leaving it entirely unused, and thus depriving the nation of its share in the value which would be derived from its employment. But there is no corresponding superior power over nations, preventing the misuse or disuse of their property and power. Shall we say, therefore, that every nation has an absolute (moral) right to what it possesses as against the interference of any other nation? If we do, we push the rights of nations against one another further than individual rights exist, even in the eyes of the Liberty and Property Defence League. It is admitted on all hands that there is a limit restraining

individual rights to property. Is there no restriction at all—no moral restriction, I mean, for, of course, there is no legal restriction—upon a nation's right to its territory and all that it contains, to use ill or not to use at all? I do not see what good ground we can give for answering this question in the affirmative,—what reason there is for asserting the absolute moral right of a nation to non-interference from without, because it happens to be legally independent. It is more difficult to say to whom the right of interference belongs and on what occasions its use may be justified. Powerful nations are not unused to playing the part of mentor to their neighbors; and advice given in this way by a powerful state has commonly been found to end in some sacrifice of independence or integrity on the part of its weaker neighbor. We may condemn the injustice of the interference and of the loss of liberty or seizure of territory to which it may lead; but our view of national morality is hardly made clearer by applying to it the law against theft, borrowed without change from private morals.

In spite of the analogy, therefore, between the relation of individuals to one another and the relation of states to one another, the moral laws which hold of the former cannot be applied to the other without so much modification and explanation as to change their meaning in an important way. When we have explained all that can properly be meant by the laws, "Thou shalt not kill," or "Thou shalt not steal," as applied to nations, we find that we have explained away everything which makes "theft" different from "murder." What remains is in the form of a general obligation upon states to observe justice in their dealings with one another. As Lord Lytton puts it, in words already quoted, "Of the classes of obligations which constitute private morals, only one, namely, justice, has a place in public morals at all." With this I agree. But I dissent from the diplomatist when he goes on to assert that "the sort of justice which finds its place in public morals is totally different from the justice which relates to individuals. It is far less definite, it cannot be codified, and it consists mainly in moderation and kindly prudence." Justice, as

I have already argued, enters the sphere of private morals only when the individual is regarded as acting in a social capacity,—when he represents in some way a community or corporation. There are not two entirely different sorts of justice, therefore,—private and public,—but justice has various degrees and modes of application according to the kind of social whole within which it is applied. It is most clearly defined and most exactly codified when determined by a duly appointed legislature and enforced by the sanctions of an executive power. Yet the reality of justice, and of the moral obligation to observe it, does not depend on legal codification or penal sanction. The progress of legislation and of the administration of law is an attempt to bring the actual laws of the country and their application into closer and closer correspondence with the demands of an ideal justice: an ideal imperfectly apprehended, indeed, but yet appealed to as the criterion by which laws themselves are to be judged.

Such laws apply only to individuals and to corporations within the state. It is only there that justice is clearly defined and codified, and obtains the sanction of law. In international relations, on the other hand, we enter a region where definitions are less clear, where those rules only are codified which apply to the minor questions of international relation, to the neglect of weightier matters, and where the sanctions with which we are so familiar are conspicuous by their absence. We may even go the length of saying that there is no such thing as international law: for law implies a sovereign power over the subjects of it, enforcing obedience by penal sanctions. But this is no good reason for concluding that there is no such thing as international morality, or (with Lord Lytton) that the “sort of justice which finds its place in public morals is totally different from the justice which relates to individuals.” According to the diplomatist, the only justice to be recognized here “consists mainly in moderation and kindly prudence.” Overlooking the counsel to kindness and moderation,—as we may be allowed to do, for it is hardly put forward as a moral law,—we see that international justice is made to consist in prudence, a view which distinguishes it

sharply from justice in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Justice within the state involves impartiality in dealing with the competing claims of individuals; whereas the state is said to act justly to neighboring states if it is prudent,—*i.e.*, looks after its own interests. Self-preservation (as the theory is otherwise put) is the only end for the state in its foreign relations; self-interest the only standard by which its action is to be guided.

Even this, however, is not a denial of international morality, but only a special theory of its content. The theory overlooks, I think, important elements in the nature and development of nations; but yet it is one which may without inconsistency be held by those whose view of private duty has far transcended Egoism, the gospel of selfishness. As Lord Lytton says, "Think of a nation solely as a simple unit, and we must affirm that, as such, in its relations with other units of the same kind, it is not only entitled, but bound, to act with greater seeming selfishness than would be morally permissible to any single individual in the like relations. But look upon nations as what they really are,—aggregates of citizens holding each other's interests in mutual trust,—and then the moral significance of what is called national selfishness is wholly changed. It ceases to be selfishness in any proper sense of the word. It becomes patriotism. And the rulers of a nation who should sacrifice its interests to those of other nations would be guilty of a breach of trust, whether the ruling power be one or many, a despotism or a democracy." And, again, "we can all conceive of circumstances in which it might be the clear duty of an individual to sacrifice his life for the good of others. But are any circumstances conceivable in which it would be as clearly the duty of a nation to extinguish its national existence for the benefit of other nations or of humanity at large? To answer this question in the affirmative would be paradoxical." It would indeed involve a misconception both of individual morals and of the function of the state. Sacrifice of his individual life is only a duty for the individual when such a loss is the sole means of attaining a greater good than personal life, or avoid-

ing a greater evil than death. But the state has no such personal life to lay down. It is its function to guard and develop the lives of its citizens, and so to direct the national life, with its power of limitless continuance and development, as to make it contribute to that greater purpose which can be realized only through the social and political relations of men. How can we even conceive as possible the voluntary sacrifice of its own life by a nation? Is it the act (or idea) of the ruler without the consent of the people? In this case it is not national self-sacrifice at all, but a sacrifice of others,—a betrayal of trust on the part of the person whose duty it was to protect them. If, on the other hand, it is to be conceived as a unanimous act of self-sacrifice on the part of all the people, then all that can be said is, that any nation, whose citizens are capable of such heroism, must surely be worth preserving on account of their unique moral development.

National morality differs from individual morals in this respect, that a nation's first duty may be said to be to itself. There is no selfishness, there is only patriotism, in its recognizing the fact and acting upon it. A nation is complete and independent in a sense in which the individual is not. Throughout his whole life a man is dependent upon others. In what he does and what he gets he is equally a member of the body politic, and not an independent unit. Even his mind, which we sometimes regard as so peculiarly his own that freedom of thought has been erected into a first principle of individualistic ethics, is derived from and depends upon others, in respect of his inherited character and of the bundle of precepts and prejudices, of truth and truism, which he has learned with his mother tongue. But the national life is, in a sense, complete in itself, and we may conceive a nation living cut off from all intercourse with other nations, just as Bishop Berkeley thought that, if Ireland were surrounded by a wall of brass a thousand cubits high, its natives might nevertheless "live cleanly and comfortably, till the land, and reap the fruits of it."

In the case of an individual man, the causes which bring him into contact and union with others precede his own individual life and determine its character. But the national life

precedes international relations. We must, therefore, expect that international morality should be of later growth, and even, perhaps, of less importance than individual morals.

From this circumstance, too, results the absence—or almost complete absence—of any sanctions in the reign of public morals, such as we find compelling obedience to the more essential portions of private morals. This absence of sanction makes international law a dream of that distant future, in which a confederacy of states shall be strong enough to control the aggressive instincts of any single nation. But even now, with constant intercourse between different nations, the incomplete sanctions which at present appeal to the prudence and self-interest of nations have made them render homage to certain portions of international morality. Commerce has vindicated its importance, and no European state would now venture to repudiate a public debt. They have foresight enough to see the importance of money, and that the confidence of financial circles, once shaken is not easily regained. Thus debts are paid, even when treaties are often broken, if it is worth a state's while to offend the other contracting parties by doing so, and it is powerful enough to run the risk.

The principles of morality have as yet had but a partial triumph in regulating the relations of states. But their validity does not depend on the recognition hitherto obtained by them, and the intercourse of nations can only reach a full measure of development under a common moral law, which recognizes the rights of one nation as of equal value with the rights of any other.

The conclusions of this paper may be summed up as follows:

1. That, since nations differ from individuals, the laws of national morality cannot be identified with those of private morality.

2. That, since a nation is a body of individuals connected by race and territory and organized for political purposes,—since, therefore, it is an organism consisting, in every part, of moral organisms,—the nation itself is the subject of morality.

3. That this conclusion is not affected by the almost complete absence from international relations of the usual sanctions of morality, seeing that morality is not, like law, dependent on sanctions, and that even private morality is, to a large extent, beyond the reach of social and political sanctions.

4. That the duty of self-preservation and self-development holds for a nation in a way in which it does not hold for an individual, seeing that a nation possesses an independence and self-sufficiency which are not shared by the individual.

5. That this duty of self-preservation should be recognized as holding for all nations, so that, when different nations are brought into contact, their relation to one another should be determined by an equal regard for the rights of all.

But it must still be added :

6. That, as long as there is no superior power to enforce this international morality, that nation only is wise which is prepared to defend its rights.

W. R. SORLEY.

J. S. MILL'S SCIENCE OF ETHOLOGY.

IN the preface to the first edition of his "Logic," Mill described the main drift of its concluding book in these words : " It is an attempt to contribute towards the solution of a question which the decay of old opinions and the agitation that disturbs European society to its inmost depths render as important in the present day to the practical interests of human life as it must at all times be to the completeness of our speculative knowledge,—viz., whether moral and social phenomena are really exceptions to the general certainty and uniformity of the course of nature ; and how far the methods by which so many of the laws of the physical world have been numbered among truths irrevocably acquired and universally assented to can be made instrumental to the for-